

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method comprising:  
communicatively coupling a removable upgrade decoder to a consumer premise component (CPC), said upgrade decoder being configured to decode a data stream; and  
downloading a computer program code to said CPC, said code enabling said CPC to access said upgrade decoder.
  
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said data stream comprises one of a Moving Picture Experts Group-4 (MPEG-4) data stream or a Windows Media 9 (WM9) data stream.
  
3. The method of claim 1, wherein said downloading a computer program code to said CPC further comprises:  
providing a boot code program configured to detect said upgrade decoder; and  
if said upgrade decoder is detected, initializing said boot code program.
  
4. The method of claim 1, wherein said program is configured to cause said CPC to:  
receive said data stream;  
transmit said data stream to said upgrade decoder to be decoded; and  
receive a decoded data stream from said updated decoder.
  
5. The method of claim 1, wherein said removable upgrade decoder further comprises:  
an interface field programmable gate array (FPGA) configured to interface with said CPC; and  
a signal decoder, wherein said signal decoder is configured to increase a signal decoding capability of said CPC.
  
6. The method of claim 5, wherein said signal decoder comprises one of an MPEG 4 decoder or a WM9 decoder.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
receiving a compressed audio/video data stream;  
transmitting said compressed audio/video data stream to said signal decoder; and  
decoding said compressed audio/video data stream with said signal decoder.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein said transmitting said compressed audio/video data stream to said signal decoder comprises:

locally encrypting said compressed audio/video data stream in said CPC;  
transmitting said encrypted compressed audio/video data stream to said removable upgrade decoder; and  
locally decrypting said encrypted compressed audio/video data stream in said removable upgrade decoder.

9. A consumer premise component (CPC), comprising:  
a tuner;  
a demodulator;  
a first interface field programmable gate array (FPGA) communicatively coupled to said demodulator; and  
a first signal decoder communicatively coupled to said interface field programmable gate array;

wherein said first interface FPGA is configured to be communicatively coupled to a removable upgrade decoder, said removable upgrade decoder including a second interface FPGA communicatively coupled to a second signal decoder.

10. The CPC of claim 9, wherein said CPC comprises one of a set-top box, a receiver unit, a digital video recorder (DVR), a digital video disk (DVD) player, or an integrated receiver decoder.

11. The CPC of claim 9, wherein said first interface FPGA is further configured to download a computer program code configured to enable said CPC to access said upgrade decoder.

12. The CPC of claim 11, wherein said first interface FPGA is further configured to:

provide a boot code program configured to detect said upgrade decoder; and if said upgrade decoder is detected, initialize said boot code program.

13. The CPC of claim 9, wherein said first interface FPGA is further configured to:

locally encrypt audio/video signals prior to transmission; and locally decrypt received encrypted audio/video signals.

14. The CPC of claim 9, wherein said first interface FPGA further comprises a hot-plug buffer configured to allow said removable upgrade decoder to be hot-swapped with said CPC.

15. The CPC of claim 9, wherein said upgrade decoder is configured to decode one of a Moving Picture Experts Group-4 (MPEG-4) data stream or a Windows Media 9 (WM9) data stream.

16. The CPC of claim 9, further comprising a plurality of buffers and filters communicatively coupled to said first signal decoder.

17. The CPC of claim 9, wherein said upgrade decoder is configured to receive a coded data stream and decode said coded data stream into a data format compatible with said first signal decoder.

18. An upgrade decoder comprising:  
an interface field programmable gate array (FPGA) configured to interface with a consumer premise component (CPC); and  
a signal decoder, wherein said signal decoder is configured to increase a signal decoding capability of said CPC.

19. The upgrade decoder of claim 18, wherein said upgrade decoder is configured to be removably coupled to said CPC.

20. The upgrade decoder of claim 18, wherein said signal decoder comprises one of a Moving Picture Experts Group-4 (MPEG-4) data stream decoder or a Windows Media 9 (WM9) data stream decoder.

21. The upgrade decoder of claim 18, wherein said FPGA further comprises:  
an encryption/decryption engine configured to locally encrypt and decrypt audio/video signals; and  
a hot-plug buffer configured to allow said upgrade decoder to be hot-swapped with said CPC.

22. A processor readable medium having instructions thereon for:  
detecting the presence of an upgrade decoder communicatively coupled to a consumer premise component (CPC);  
downloading a program code enabling said CPC to access said upgrade decoder; and if said upgrade decoder is detected, running said downloaded program code.

23. The processor readable medium of claim 22, wherein said downloading a program code further comprises:  
downloading a boot code program configured to detect said upgrade decoder; and if said upgrade decoder is detected, initializing said boot code program.

24. The processor readable medium of claim 22, further having instructions thereon for:  
passing a received media signal to said upgrade decoder for decoding;  
receiving a decoded media signal from said upgrade decoder; and  
further processing said decoded media signal through traditional circuitry in said CPC.

25. The processor readable medium of claim 24, wherein said instructions for passing a received media signal to said upgrade decoder for decoding further comprises instructions for locally encrypting said received media signal prior to passing said received media signal to said upgrade decoder.